



Exposure to adverse home experiences and children's social competencies in peer relations

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Background

- Peer relationships impact significantly on children's developmental outcomes (for reviews see Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006).
 - Positive relationships linked with better social and emotional functioning, academic performance & may protect at-risk children against later psychological problems
 - Peer difficulties linked with multiple challenges, including cognitive impairments, emotion problems, school drop-out, delinquency and psychopathology.
- Due to the widespread influence of peer relationships on both current and long-term functioning, it is important to understand why some children experience greater difficulties than others.



Family Environment & Peer Relationships

- The family environment provides children with their earliest experiences of observing and participating in social interaction.
- It is repeatedly identified as a contributor to children's peer outcomes.
 - Children whose parents are warm and supportive are more likely to have positive peer relationships (e.g. Brown, Mounts, Lamborn, & Steinberg, 1993), while family environments characterized by hostile interactions have been linked with peer rejection, social withdrawal, and participation in antisocial activities (e.g. Fletcher, Steinberg, & Williams-Wheeler, 2004).

Thus, knowing the characteristics of the family environment has important implications for understanding why some children and adolescents are better able to interact successfully with their peers.



- Various theories have been offered to explain these associations.
 - Social learning theory
 - Attachment theory
- Research also supports these associations:
 - Conflict between parents:
 - For example: Du Rocher Schudlich et al. (2004) found that children who experience high levels of marital conflict at home were less skilled at suggesting possible solutions in conflict situations with peers.
 - Conflict between parents and children:
 - For example: Adams and Laursen (2007) found that adolescents' reports of conflictual parent-child relationships was associated with lower school grades, social withdrawal and delinquency.



- Research on the impact of adverse home experiences on children's peer relations has progressed to investigating potential linking mechanisms.
 - The identification of mediators and moderators may help **explain** the processes involved.
- For example, difficult parent-child relationships may mediate the association between a conflictual home environment and conflictual peer encounters (e.g. Engfer, 1988)
 - “spillover hypothesis”



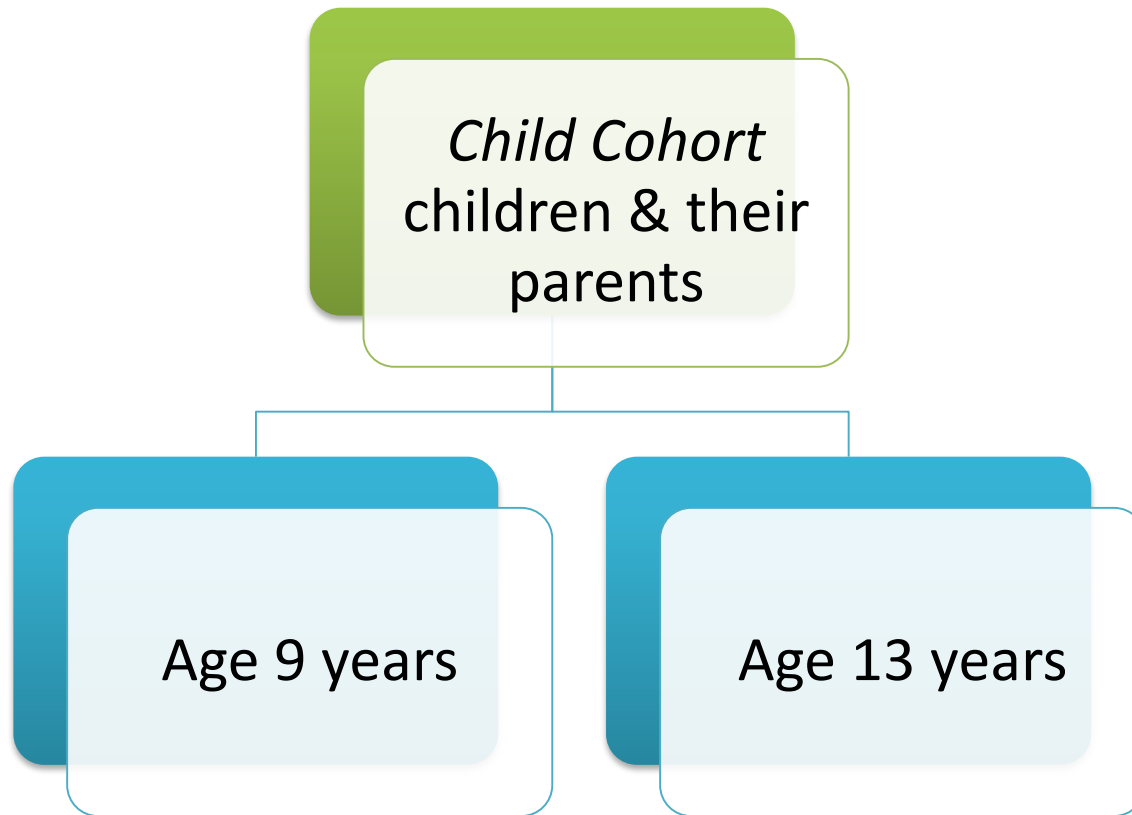
Research Questions

The present study seeks to investigate the effects of early adverse home experiences on children's social and interpersonal competencies within the peer group.

- Do children with and without the experience of early home adversity differ on various measures of social competence and peer relationships?
- Does increased exposure to early home adversity increased negative outcomes?
- Does the parent-child relationship mediate the association between early adverse home experiences and peer relationship difficulties?



Method: Participants



Adverse home experiences

Life Events Scale - parental conflict or separation, mental illness, drug or alcohol abuse, or a parent in prison

Parent-child relationship

Pianta Conflict Subscale

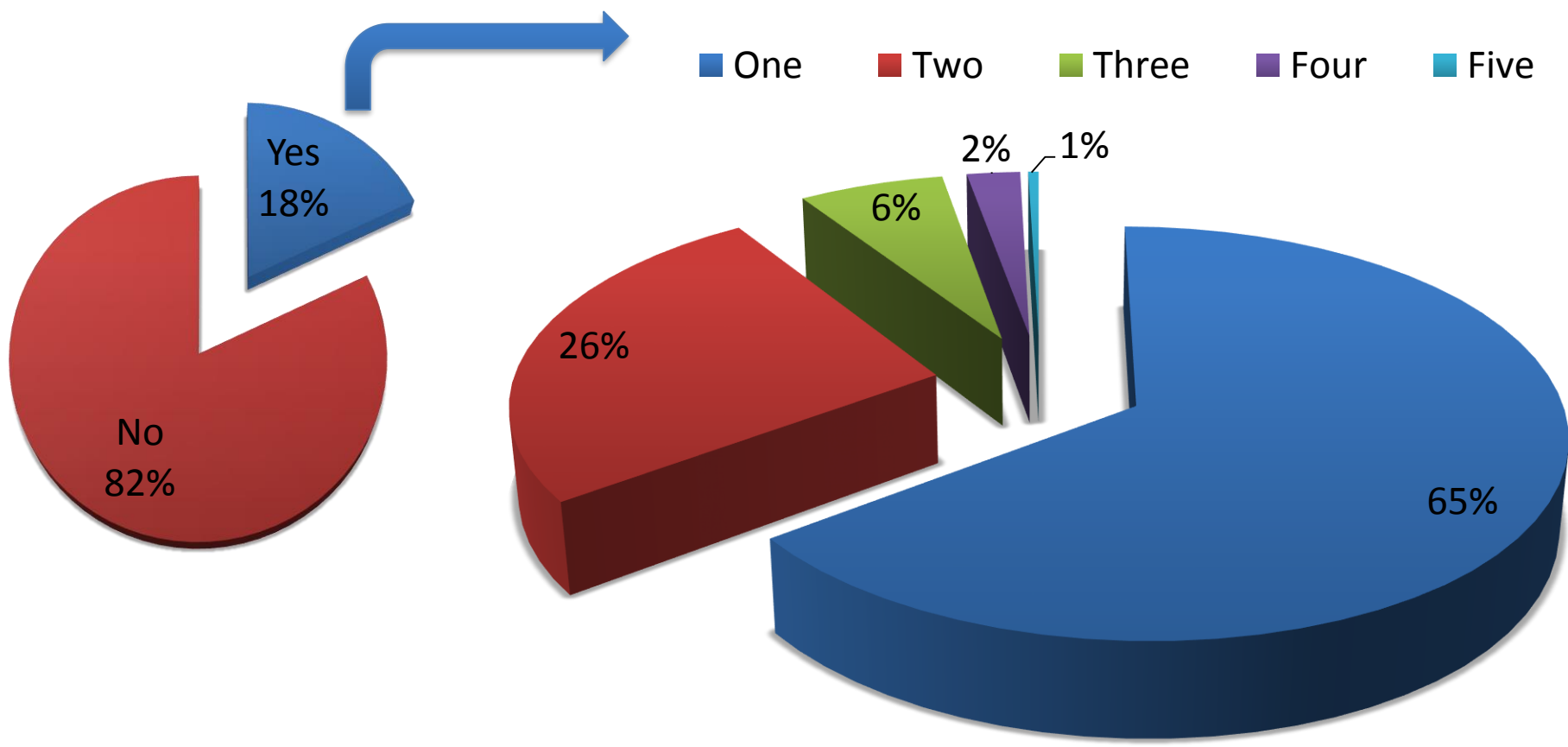
Peer relationships

Peer Difficulties & Pro-social Subscales of the *SDQ*

Piers Harris Social Self-Concept

IPPA Alienation & Trust Subscales

Experience of Early Home Adversity





Results: Do children with and without the experience of early home adversity differ on various measures of social competence and peer relationships? Age 9

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		N	Mean	Std. D	Effect Size
PCG SDQ Peer Diff**	No HA	7021	-1.058	1.369	
	HA	986	1.485	1.594	0.29
PCG SDQ Pro Social	No HA	7026	8.899	1.416	
	HA	990	8.832	1.511	0.05
Piers Harris Popularity**	No HA	6801	8.827	2.314	
	HA	952	8.445	2.473	0.16
Piers Harris Freedom from anxiety**	No HA	6741	10.994	2.782	
	HA	937	10.577	2.868	0.15



Results: Do children with and without the experience of early home adversity differ on various measures of social competence and peer relationships? Age 13

		N	Mean	Std. D	Effect Size
PCG SDQ Peer Diff**	No HA	6229	-0.045	0.956	
	HA	1294	0.215	1.167	0.25
PCG SDQ Pro Social*	No HA	6229	0.017	0.988	
	HA	1294	-0.082	1.053	0.10
Piers Harris Popularity**	No HA	6134	0.030	0.970	
	HA	1269	-0.145	1.122	0.17
SMFQ**	No HA	6151	-0.034	0.968	
	HA	1269	0.166	1.130	0.20
IPPA Alienation**	No HA	6100	-0.019	0.992	
	HA	1259	0.093	1.032	0.11



Results: Does increased exposure to early home adversity increased negative outcomes? Age 9

	N	<i>r</i>
PCG SDQ Peer Diff	8544	0.128**
PCG SDQ Pro Social	8553	-0.14**
Piers Harris Popularity	8270	-0.087**
Piers Harris Free from Anxiety	8187	-0.084**



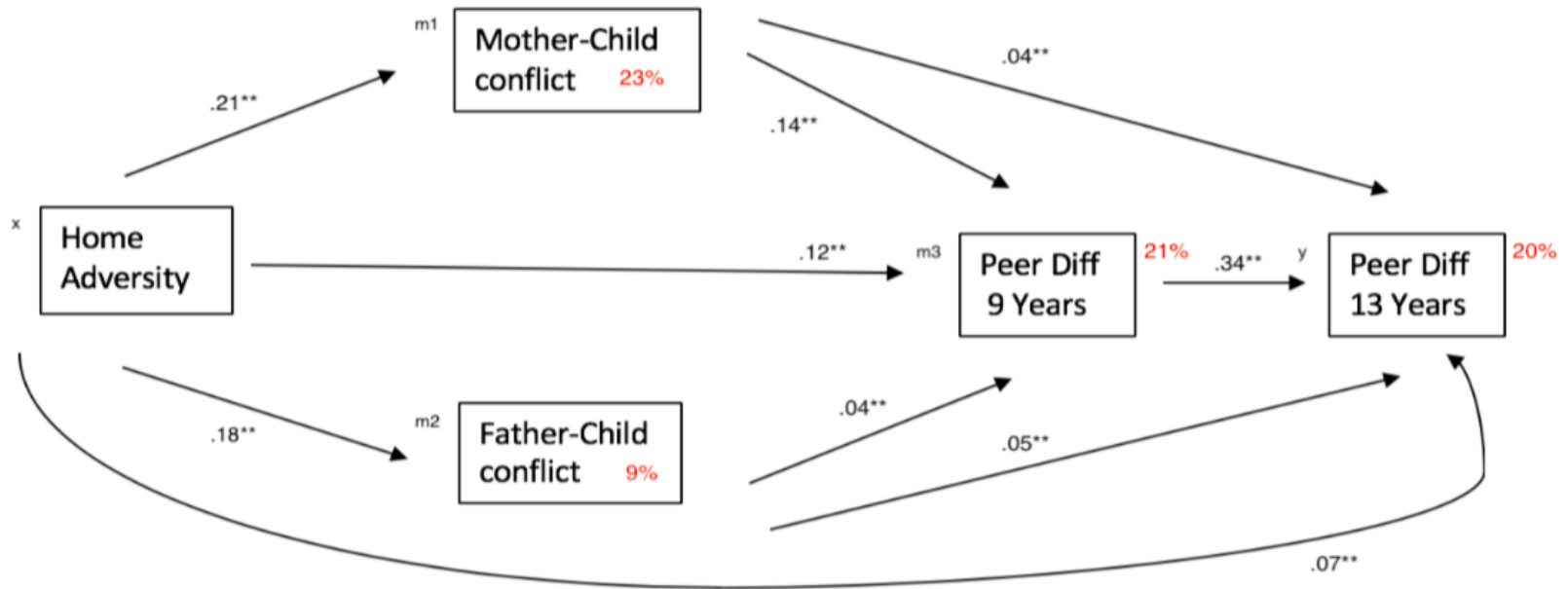
Results: Does increased exposure to early home adversity increased negative outcomes? Age 13

	N	<i>r</i>
PCG SDQ Peer Diff	7523	0.098**
PCG SDQ Pro Social	7523	-0.037**
Piers Harris Popularity	7403	-0.066**
SMFQ	7420	0.075**
IPPA Alienation	7359	0.042**

□



Results: Does the parent-child relationship mediate the association between early adverse home experiences and peer relationship difficulties?



Total Effect: $b = 0.135$, $SE = 0.027$, $P > .01$
 Direct Effect: $b = 0.067$, $SE = 0.026$, $P > .05$

Indirect Effect: $XM1Y = .001$, $BootSE = .003$, 95% CI = $.002$ to $.015$; $XM2Y = .001$, $BootSE = .003$, 95% CI = $.003$ to $.014$;
 $XM3Y = .040$, $BootSE = .012$, 95% CI = $.016$ to $.064$; $XM1M3Y = .010$, $BootSE = .002$, 95% CI = $.006$ to $.014$; $XM2M3Y = .002$,
 $BootSE = .001$, 95% CI = $.001$ to $.004$;



Key Findings

- Children and adolescents who experienced early home adversity have poorer peer outcomes than children without such experiences.
- Experiencing a greater number of adverse home events is related to poorer social and peer outcomes at both time points.
- Greater early home adversity is associated with peer difficulties at age 9 years and 13 years. This association is partially mediated by conflict in the parent-child relationship with both primary and secondary caregivers.



Questions? Thank you!!

- Feel free to ask us any questions. Also don't hesitate to contact us or our co-presenter and supervisor Dr Lorraine Swords with any questions via email.
- Emails: swordsl@tcd.ie , swhelan4@tcd.ie and dalrympn@tcd.ie
- Thank you so much for your time and attention this afternoon.